

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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OMB-01 IGA-02 TRSE-00 IO-13 OES-06 EUR-12 EA-07 /103 W

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P R 050950Z MAY 76

FM AMEMBASSY DACCA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 581

INFO AMCONSUL CALCUTTA

AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L DACCA 2314

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, IN, BG

SUBJECT: FARAKKA TALKS: DIVERGENT VIEWS

REF: DACCA 2224

1. SUMMARY. FIRST ROUND FARAKKA TECHNICAL TALKS HELD HERE APRIL 27 TO MAY 2 APPEAR TO HAVE ENDED ON LESS GLOOMY NOTE THAN THEY BEGAN (REFTEL). WE HAVE HIGHLY DIVERGENT VIEWS OF THE TONE OF THESE TALKS FROM WORKING LEVEL MEMBERS OF THE TWO DELEGATIONS, THE INDIANS REPORTING A QTE FRIENDLY AND RELAXED ATMOSPHERE UNQTE AND THE BANGLADESHIS TELLING US THE TALKS WERE QTE STIFF UNQTE AND MARKED BY QTE DISTRUST UNQTE. IN ANY CASE, SECOND ROUND IS TO BEGIN MAY 6 AND FOREIGN SECRETARY TELLS US HE EXPECTS INDIAN GOODWILL MISSION WILL COME TO DACCA IN LATE MAY AS SCHEDULED. END SUMMARY.

2. XJ INDIAN TECHNICAL MISSION LED BY C.C. PATEL, ADDITIONAL SECRETARY TO THE DEPARTMENT OF IRRIGATION AND INCLUDING J.S. AJMANI, ADDITIONAL SECRETARY, MINISTRY OFNXTERNAL AFFAIRS, VISITED BANGLADESH FROM APRIL 27 TO MAY 2 TO EXCHANGE DATA ON THE EFFECTS
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OF WITHDRAWALS FROM THE GANGES AT FARAKKA. THE NINE-MEMBER INDIAN

TEAM ACCOMPANIED BY THEIR BANGLADESH COUNTERPARTS LED BY MR. B.M. ABBAS, TECHNICAL ADVISOR TO THE PRESIDENT ON FLOOD CONTROL, IRRIGATION AND POWER AND ASAFUDDOWLA, CHAIRMAN, WATER DEVELOPMENT BOARD VISITED KHULNA, OVERFLEW THE GANGES BY HELICOPTER, AND VISITED BHERAMARA POWZ STATION, GANGES-KOBADEK IRRIGATION SCHEME, HARDINGE BRIDGE WATER LEVEL GAUGES AT PAKSEY AND KHULNA NEWSPRINT MILLS AS PART OF THEIR FIRST HAND LOOK AT EFFECTS OF WATER DIVERSION.

3. ACCORDING ASFUDDOWLA, THE BANGLADESH DELEGATION PRESENTED THE INDIAN DELEGATION WITH A QTE BRIEF MEMORANDUM QUANTIFYING THE EFFECTS UNQTE OF GANGES DIVERSION ON BANGLADESH. THE NEXT ROUND OF TALKS IS TO BEGIN CALCUTTA ON MAY 6 AND IS EXPECTED TO LAST THREE TO FIVE DAYS AND WILL BE FOLLOWED PERHAPS AS EARLY AS THE THIRD WEEK OF MAY BY A QTE GOODWILL UNQTE MISSION FROM INDIA EXPECTED TO BE HEADED BY G. PARTHASARATHY.

4. ACCORDING TO ASAFUDDOWLA, ATMOSPHERE IN THIS LATEST ROUND OF TECHNICAL TALKS WAS EXTREMELY STIFF AND FORMAL, AND MARKED BY EXTREME DEGREE OF DISTRUST THERE WAS NO JOINT COMMUNIQUE OR PRESS RELEASE. IN HIS VIEW, ENTIRE TECHNICAL LEVEL EXERCISE IS SIMPLY DELAYING TACTIC BY INDIANS, WHO, FOR EXAMPLE, REQUESTED QTE SIXTY YEARS UNQTE OF BACK-UP DATA IN SUPPORT OF CONCLUSIONS OFFERED IN BDG BRIEF MEMORANDUM. FURTHERMORE, INDIANS HAVE SO FAR REFUSED TO REVEAL ACTUAL RATE OF WITHDRAWALS AT FARAKKA (SEE REFTEL). AND HAVE YET TO AGREE TO BDG REQUEST VIEW DREDGING AT SAGAR, DURING SECOND ROUND OF TALKS IN WEST BENGAL, TO OBSERVE ACTUAL BENEFITS OF DIVERSION. (ASAFUDDOWLA HELD THAT DIVERSION WOULD INCREASE REPEAT INCREASE SILT PROBLEM AT CALCUTTA PORT.) INDIANS ALSO HAVE SCHEDULED TRIP TO FARAKKA BY TRAIN AT NIGHT (BOTH WAYS) TO PREVENT BDG FROM VIEWING FLOODING CAUSED BY DIVERSION.

5. ASAFUDDOWLA AGREED THAT TALKS WERE PROCEEDING ON SCHEDULE, BUT HELD THAT INDIANS WANTED TO COMPLETE PROCESS WITHIN DRY SEASON IN ORDER BE ABLE CLAIM THAT DISCUSSIONS LIMITED TO DRY-SEASON EFFECTS. ASAFUDDOWLA REPEATED THAT HE HAD BEEN UNDER INSTRUCTIONS BEND OVER BACKWARDS TO KEEP DIALOGUE OPEN. WITH THIS EFFORT, ASAFUDDOWLA SAID, BANGLADESH HAD NOW DONE ALL IT COULD WITHOUT HELP FROM ITS FRIENDS AND FACED PROSPECT OF GOING QTE WAY OF SIKKIM UNQTE WITH ITS BEST CIVIL SERVANTS LEAVING COUNTRY AS INDIAN DOMINATION BECAME REALITY. CONFIDENTIAL

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6. WHEN AMBASSADOR ALSO ASKED FOREIGN SECRETARY TABARAK HUSAIN YESTERDAY ABOUT THE RESULTS OF THE TALKS, HUSAIN SAID HE WAS LESS DISCOURAGED AT THE END OF THE MEETINGS THAN HE HAD BEEN AFTER THE OPENING ROUND (SEE REFTEL). WHILE NOTHING SUBSTANTIVE HAD OCCURRED, HE SAID, IT WAS AT LEAST ENCOURAGING THAT THE MEETINGS WOULD CONTINUE. HE SAID HE STILL EXPECTED INDIAN GOODWILL MISSION TO COME TO DACCA ON SCHEDULE IN LATE MAY BUT WAS NOT AT ALL

CERTAIN THAT THIS VISIT WOULD LEAD TO A RESOLUTION OF THE FARAKKA ISSUE, NOTING THAT THE INDIANS FEEL VERY CONFIDENT OF THEIR POSITION AND THAT THEY HAD WARNED BDG REPRESENTATIVES THAT THEY COULD NOT BE INFLUENCED BY ANY BANGLADESH ATTEMPTS TO INTERNATIONALIZE THE ISSUE. HUSAIN THOUGHT THAT INDIA MIGHT MAKE MARGINAL CONCESSIONS BUT THAT BANGLADESH MUST HAVE SOMETHING SUBSTANTIAL IF THE NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE GOODWILL MISSION ARE TO BE SUCCESSFUL.

7. A SHARPLY CONTRASTING PICTURE OF THE TONE OF THE TALKS WAS DRAWN FOR US TODAY BY RONEN SEN, THE INDIAN DELEGATION MEMBER FROM THE HIGH COMMISSION HERE, WHO HE DESCRIBED THE TALKS AS QTE FRIENDLY AND RELAXED UNQTE. THE INDIANS HAD ASKED FOR DATA IN THE SUPPORT OF THE BANGLADESH STATEMENT OF FARAKKA EFFECTS (SEE PARA 4 ABOVE) BUT ONLY FOR QTE ANY CONSECUTIVE FIVE YEAR PERIOD UNQTE. THESE DATA HAVE NOT YET BEEN RECEIVED. THE INDIANS HAD YET TO PROVIDE THE BANGLADESHIS ANY DATA FROM THEIR SIDE BUT THIS WOULD BE DONE DURING THE BANGLADESH DELEGATIONS VISIT TO INDIA. THE DELEGATION WOULD BE PERMITTED TO QTE GO ANYWHERE AND SEE ANYTHING UNQTE.

8. SEN HINTED AT POSSIBILITY OF ADDITIONAL NEED FOR VISITS BACK AND FORTH FOR PURPOSE QTE LIMITED CHECKING UNQTE FOLLOWING FULL EXCHANGE OF DATA. THAT IS, IN LIGHT OF KNOWLEDGE OF EXACT AMOUNTS BEING DIVERTED AT FARAKKA AND DOWNSTREAM FLOWS, FURTHER JOINT CHECKS MIGHT BE NECESSARY TO ASCERTAIN AMOUNTS OF WATER REGENERATED, EFFECT ON SALINITY, ETC. SEN WAS CONFIDZWZ THIS WOULD NOT DELAY GOODWILL MISSION, BUT NOTED THAT TIMING OF MISSION COULD BE AFFECTED BY OTHER EVENTS SUCH AS INDO-PAK TALKS.
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